

*Advocating smart living through sustainability and environmental awareness*

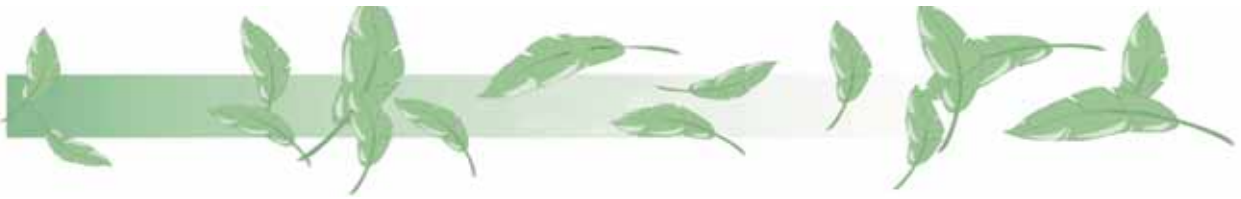


# **2011 MADEP Sustainable Materials Recovery Program Grant**



## **Community Event Recycling Initiative Report**

**January 28, 2013**



## Acknowledgements

We offer special appreciation to those individuals that helped us with volunteer hours and resources to make this grant project possible.

The Steering Committee of Sustainable Braintree whose members provided input during this project.

The Sustainable Braintree Recycling Task Force whose members invested valuable personal time and resources to have the vision for community event recycling. Eileen Campbell and Linda Chapman are especially thanked for their tireless efforts to make community event recycling a reality.

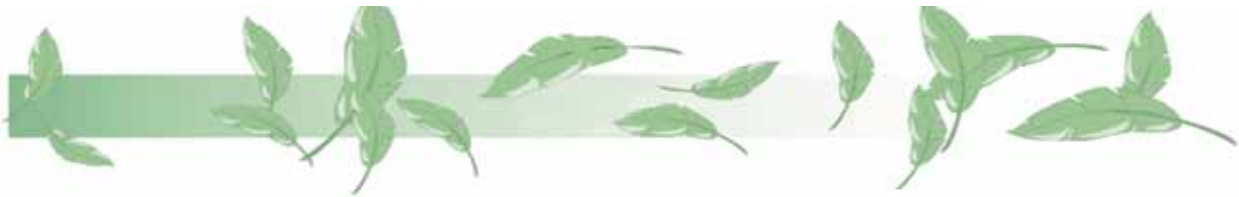
The Mayor's Office and specifically, Mayor Joseph Sullivan, for his support in this and many other Sustainable Braintree projects.

Thomas Whalen, Director of the Department of Public Works, who assisted in various parts of this project.

Nelson Chin, Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Department, who enthusiastically embraced Sustainable Braintree's recycling efforts.

Ann McGovern of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection who patiently worked with us providing insight and support.





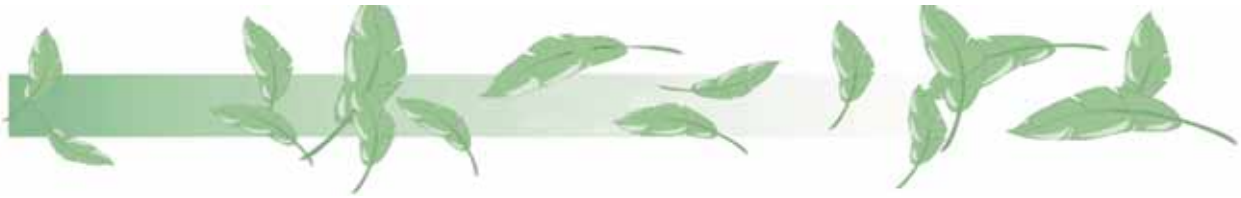
## Our History

Sustainable Braintree started out as a small group of concerned residents five years ago, who wanted to reduce their own impact on the environment while maintaining a quality lifestyle. Although governmental inaction on many levels has prevailed, we believed that climate change is a real and an urgent issue for which all citizens are responsible.

Sustainable Braintree, Inc. has evolved into an advocacy group promoting sustainability and environmental stewardship in our community. Momentum has been building within Sustainable Braintree, town government, and other organizations to make a difference – a difference we hope will make our community a leader in energy conservation, renewable energy, recycling, and many other sustainable benefits to our community.

Sustainable Braintree conducts much of its work through four task forces: Food (the Braintree Farmers Market), Recycling, Community Garden, and Energy. Within each group, committed individuals actively work to search out valuable information, educate the community, and help implement sustainable projects within our community. Through these efforts, Sustainable Braintree seeks to build a sense of community and make the Town of Braintree a leader in environmental responsibility that will carry us into the future.





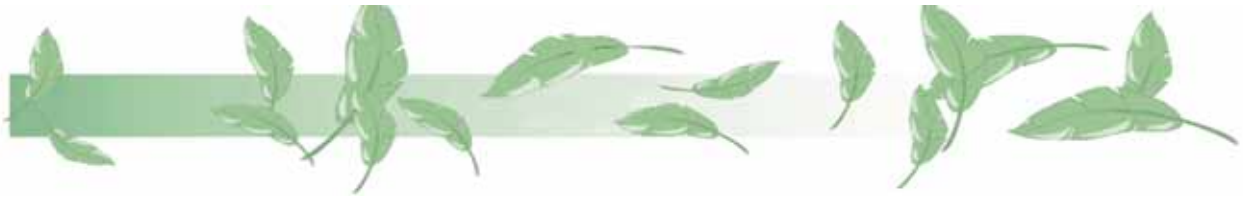
## Introduction

There is a real need to expand recycling to include community events in the Town of Braintree. Community events like the all-day Braintree Independence Day (4<sup>th</sup> of July) event, Relay for Life, community movie night, summer camp, and youth sports events generate approximately 1-2% of the total waste (~200 tons) collected annually for disposal within our community. Little to none of this waste is segregated for recyclable containers, paper, and cardboard.

Sustainable Braintree, Inc. submitted a Sustainable Materials Recovery Program Municipal Grant (SMRP Grant) Application to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (MADEP) on June 2, 2011. The Application requested funds to develop and implement a community event recycling program in the Town of Braintree. The MADEP awarded Sustainable Braintree a grant contract for \$10,000 to implement the program.

Under the grant, Sustainable Braintree agreed to develop and implement the Braintree Community Event Recycling Program with the following elements:

- Collaborate with Town officials to develop program requirements and community event organizer responsibilities through the town permitting process.
- Develop presentation materials and meet with community event organization leaders to discuss program elements and offer assistance in setting up recycling procedures for the organization.
- Develop education outreach materials and signage for community organizers, parents, children to promote community event recycling.
- Purchase recycling bins and work with community event organizations to place them at events as needed. Sustainable Braintree will initially coordinate these activities with the intent that the Town would take over and oversee this responsibility in future years.
- Coordinate with the Braintree Department of Public Works to pick up the recyclables for delivery to the town Recycling Center.
- Monitor the type and volume of recyclables, contaminant levels and provide reports to the MADEP.



## The Permit

In general, community event and sports league organizers have not initiated recycling efforts at their events and sports venues. On a small scale, recycling efforts have been initiated; for example, at the winter adult basketball games where a recycling container was installed in the basketball gym. Volunteers then take the recyclables for curbside pickup or to the Town Recycling Center. Understandably, organizers have generally been slow or even resistant to recycling efforts at their events because of the logistics necessary to make it a success with already limited event resources available.

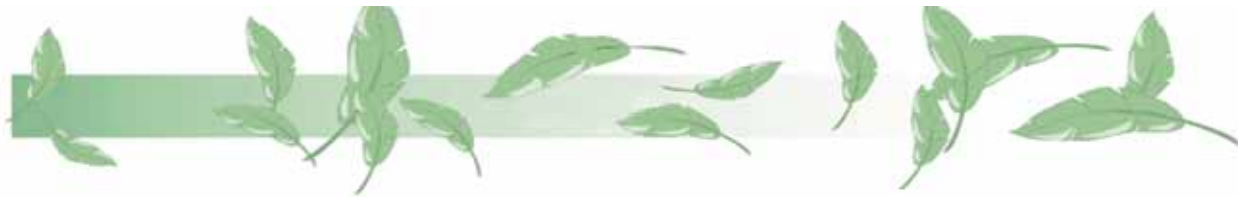
In order to promote event recycling and organizer accountability, Sustainable Braintree initiated a series of meetings with Town officials and the Mayor's Office to determine how mandatory recycling could be introduced into the permit. In the Town of Braintree, an organizer of a community event or sports league must apply for a *Parks, Playgrounds, Town Field & Facility Use Permit* to stage their events in Town. The two-page permit application must be submitted to the Parks & Recreation Department. The Application has on page 2 the, *Rules and Regulations Governing Use of Braintree's Fields and Facilities*. The rules and regulations outline that general requirements to ensure that town property is protected and the Town is indemnified by the organizers. A permit can also be issued with event specific requirements.

Prior to 2012, the Rules and Requirements only stated that town property must be "*left in as clean or cleaner condition after each use*". The Town would work with the organizer to ensure that trash collected during and after the event would be properly disposed either by the Town or the organizer.

It was our intent to have the Town commit to a change in the Rules and Regulations that required organizers to implement recycling at their events. We would then offer education and volunteer assistance to several organizations under the SMRP grant to get their recycling programs up and running. The ultimate goal, of course, was to have the Town and organizers eventually take responsibility with the coordination of recyclables collection and pickup.

The image shows a two-page permit application form from the Braintree Recreation Department. The header includes the town seal and the name of the Mayor, Joseph C. Sullivan. The title is "Braintree Recreation Department Parks, Playgrounds, Town Field & Facility Use Permit Application". Below the title is a paragraph of instructions for applicants. The form contains several sections for applicant information, including Name of Town/League/Organization, Date of Application, Name of Applicant/Representative, Home Telephone, Address of Applicant, Zip Code, Business or Cell Phone, and Email address. There is a section for the applicant to agree to comply with the town's rules and regulations. The form also includes fields for the Area/Field/Facility Requested, Purpose of Use, Specific Date(s) of Request to Use, Day(s) of Week, Hours of Use Needed, Number of People Expected to Attend, League Entered (if any), and Schedule Submitted. A section for Special Instructions or Requests for Facility Preparation is also present. The form concludes with a section for the applicant's signature and date, and a section for the Town's Representative's signature and date, labeled "APPROVAL OF APPLICATION".





## Old Permit Application Rules & Regulations

### Rules and Regulations Governing Use of Braintree's Fields and Facilities

1. Parking of vehicles by facility users (participants and players) must be controlled. Permits do not convey to anyone the privilege of parking of vehicles anywhere except within legally provided spaces. *At no time are vehicles to be driven or parked upon any field area.* If there isn't a parking lot at the facility this permit is granted, you are to park on the field side of the street curbside.
2. It is understood that fields/facilities must be left in as clean or cleaner condition after each use. All litter and debris must be removed and properly deposited in trash barrels.
3. The Town of Braintree has an "OPEN CONTAINER" by-law that prohibits possession, consumption or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages while using public facilities. This includes spectators and participants. This will be strictly enforced and is punishable by fine for anyone in violation. This by-law extends to parking lots and public ways as well. In addition, state law prohibits smoking anywhere on school department grounds at any time, which is similarly punishable by fine. Permit holders are to ensure that participants and spectators are well aware of these laws and the possible consequences.

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The Town discussions resulted in a change of language under the Permit Rules & Regulations that required recycling where available. This language change fell short of actually mandating recycling at community events and youth sports venues. We found that the commitment to mandatory recycling required overcoming Town political, legal, and labor issues that could not be resolved within the few months before the traditional summer event permits were to be issued.

The Town did agree to attach an additional instructional sheet to the permit issued to event organizers. As shown in Appendix A, the sheet outlines the specific requirements regarding trash disposal and recycling.

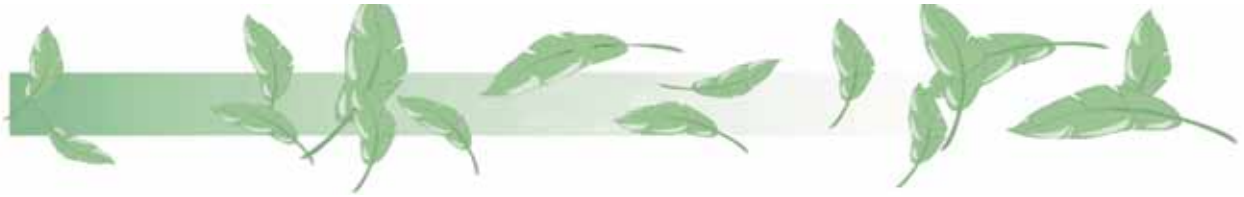
The permit language change represents a small step in resolving a larger issue - whether mandatory recycling at community events and youth sports venues in a town the size of Braintree represents value-added environmental stewardship worthy of

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the volunteer, political, and financial wherewithal necessary to make it happen. Although we believe that all recycling has some value-added environmental stewardship for a planet with limited resources, overcoming the existing political environ in any town can become a humbling experience and volunteer intensive despite good intentions on both sides.

## **The Presentation**

We proposed under the SMRP Grant to develop materials for making presentations on how to set up recycling programs to event organizers. The presentations would be short in length (15-30 minutes) and include limited catering to entice key individuals from organizations to attend and benefit from our recycling program experience.

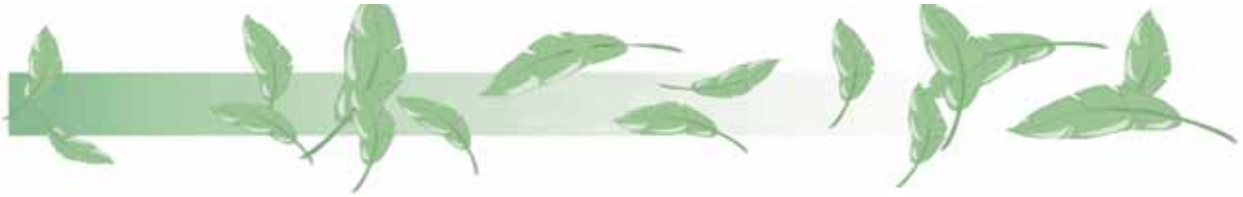
However, we only held one presentation for the Relay for Life. The Relay for Life holds an annual event to raise cancer awareness and funds, by holding a walk-all-night 24-hour event at the Town high school running track. Relay for Life was very receptive to our offer and as a group enthusiastically worked with our volunteers to make recycling a success at the event.

We were unable to make any additional presentations although a number of sports leagues and event organizers were contacted. We believe that organizers would have been more receptive to our educational outreach and volunteer assistance had recycling been made mandatory under the Permit.

We also used the one-on-one approach: seeking out key individuals and appealing to them directly on offering assistance to implement recycling at their community event or youth sports venue. Even this approach did not result in significant results, particularly early on with the youth sports leagues. Sustainable Braintree found itself unable to negotiate a mutually agreed upon recycling effort at youth baseball venues; in part to a Chairman vacancy at the Town Parks & Recreation Department that was not filled until May 2012. It was clear that endorsement from the Parks & Recreation Department was critical to this effort.

## **The Educational Outreach**

Using nongrant funds, we retained Neville Graphics to prepare various outreach materials for community events and youth sports venues. This included stickers for recycling containers, seasonal signage for sports leagues, and handouts to parents involved in youth sports.



Examples of the recycling container stickers purchased under the SMRP Grant are shown below.

Recycling barrel sticker.



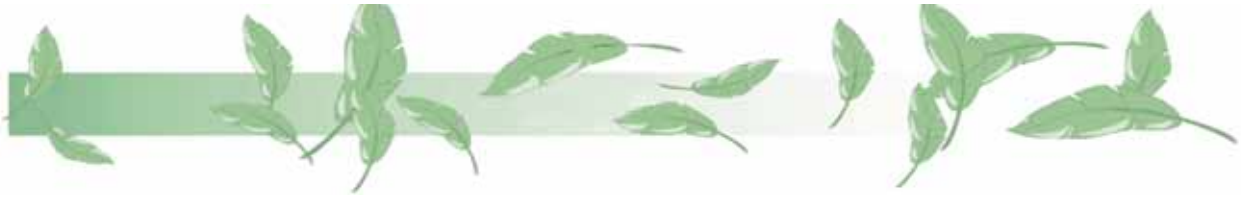
Recycling barrels at the Relay for Life in May 2012.

Recycling barrel stickers on a recycling barrel at the Braintree Farmers Market.



We also had Neville Design create a handout to give to youth baseball parents and a park sign promoting recycling that would have been posted at the baseball parks. These materials were designed but not used because a final agreement to initiate recycling at two different youth baseball venues could not be reached.





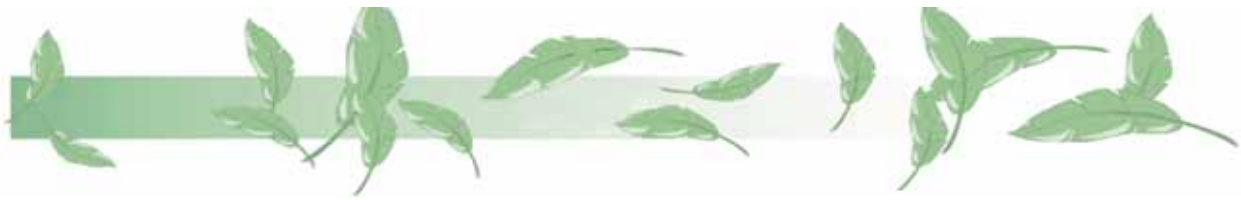
Front & back of youth baseball handout that was to be provided to parents after signing up.



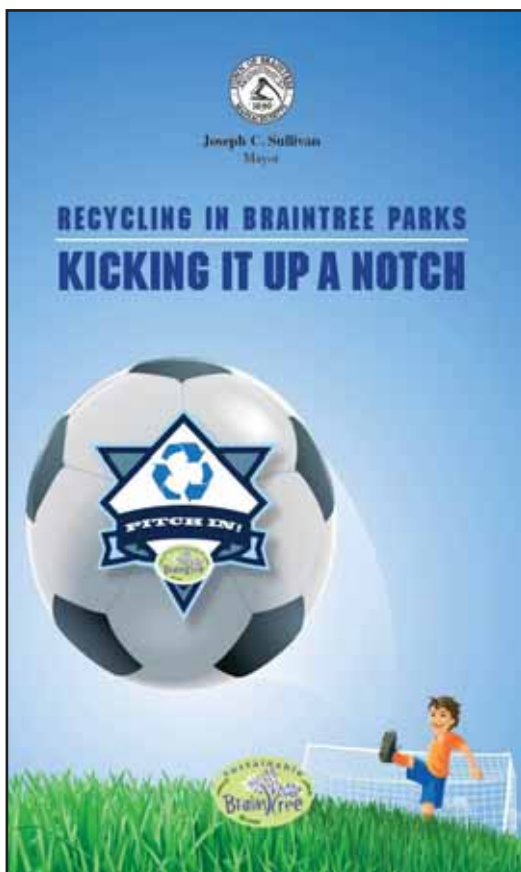
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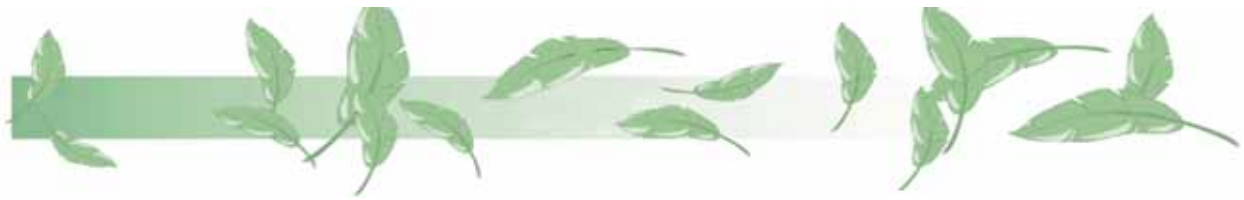
Sign designed for posting at youth baseball venues.



Neville Design also created a parental handout for the youth soccer. We were able to coordinate a recycling program with the youth soccer league at one of our middle schools and the Parks & Recreation Department. This handout was provided on glossy stock and inserted in an information packet to all parents who signed up their children. Two thousand handouts were provided to the league who used their own volunteer help to insert the handout into each parent's packet. All of the handout copies were used by the league.



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## The Recycling Containers

Sustainable Braintree used grant funds to purchase two types of recycling barrels. They were designated event barrels and seasonal barrels. Event barrels were purchased based on their lighter weight and serviceability at local events and stackable storage. Seasonal barrels were heavy duty for placement at a sports field and able to withstand inclement weather conditions and potential vandalism. We also used heavy duty rope to tie on the seasonal barrel lids to discourage misappropriation of the barrels.

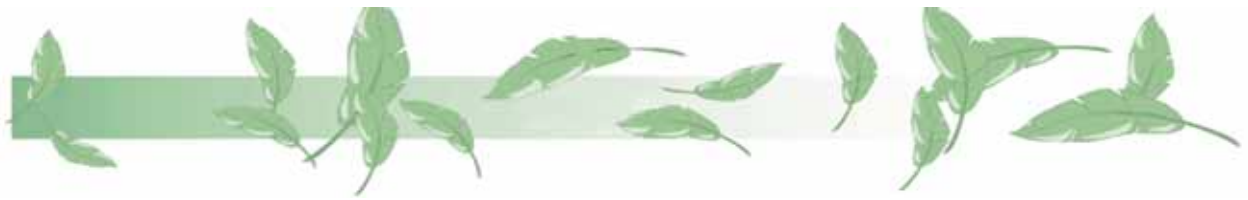
We purchased a total of 20 seasonal barrels and 75 event barrels. Although funding was available for more barrel purchases, we first wanted to work out the logistics of barrel handling and storage with Town officials and organizers before committing to any more purchases. The logistics proved more involved than expected, because previously we stored some of our own seasonal barrels at the Public Works Department storage yard. Those barrels and the newly purchased ones posed a logistics issue of who transports them to and from the event, sports venues and parks, and where would there be room to store them in the off season. Arrangements for storage were eventually made at the Public Works Department storage yard and the high school. Sustainable Braintree coordinated and provided volunteer assistance in transporting the barrels to the events during the grant period.



Event Barrel



Seasonal Barrel



## The Places

Sustainable Braintree was able to place event and/or seasonal barrels at the following locations;

- The Relay for Life at their June 24-hour event.
- The all-day Braintree Independence Day Celebration at the Braintree High School. (This represented a significantly expanded effort by Sustainable Braintree from previous years.)
- The weekly Braintree Farmers Market hosted by Sustainable Braintree.
- Town parks.
- The East Middle School soccer fields.

Further description of efforts is provided for each location.

### Relay for Life

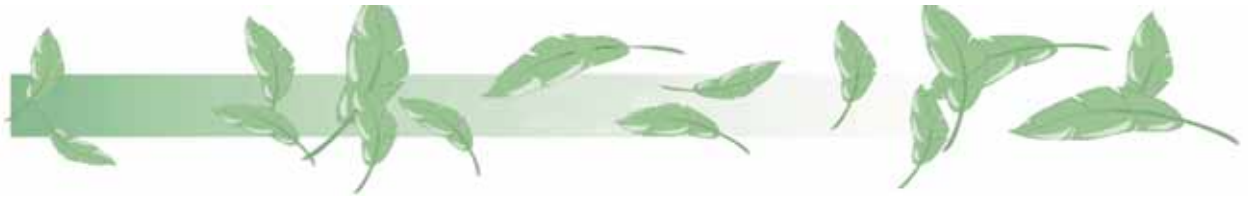
We met twice with Relay for Life in May 2012. A presentation and light catering was provided at the initial meeting. We organized and gave the presentation to the organizers and key participants.

Our volunteers delivered and set up 60 recycling barrels with plastic liners the day before the event. Periodically during the event, which ran all-night, our volunteers checked the barrels and emptied as needed throughout the event up until 11 PM and then the morning after the event.

What we collected:

- Recyclables were collected in 17 full plastic bags, ranging in weight 12-15 lbs (230 lbs total). That translated to 225-250 recyclable containers in each bag.
- There were minimal returnables. Contamination was estimated at 1% or less. There was some liquid contamination and some Styrofoam cups. There was no food product contamination.
- Relay for Life provided a people count of approximately 1,500 people at the event.
- When averaged out, there were approximately 4,000 containers recycled or 2.7 containers per person for the 24-hour event.





## **Braintree Independence Day Celebration**

In previous years, we implemented container recycling at this event. Folding cardboard box recycling containers were used that ultimately proved too fragile for the sometimes inclement weather that occurred during the event. In addition, there were insufficient recycling containers or they were not always paired with trash barrels. The results were promising, but inconsistent with some valuable lessons learned from those past efforts.

For this year's event, Sustainable Braintree and local Boy Scouts set up 50 event/seasonable barrels. Many of them were paired with trash barrels. Our volunteers monitored the barrels during the all-day event. Volunteers noted that event participants were observed placing recyclables in our event barrels throughout the day whether in paired barrels or stand-alones. And that participants were more likely to use the event barrel when given a choice of a recycling barrel or trash barrel for disposal.

Although attendance is not formally taken, organizers and police have publicly stated that as many as 25,000 people attend the all-day celebration and fireworks show each year.

The Department of Public Works, assisted by our volunteers, loaded bags of recyclables into a Department truck to be taken to the Town Recycling Center.

What we collected:

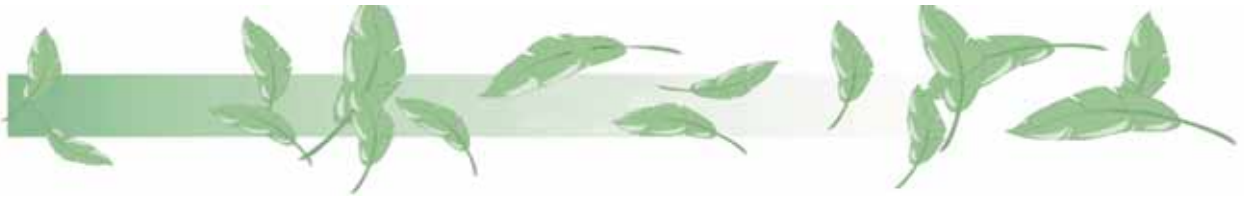
- Collected 53 bags ranging in weight from 2-12 lbs.
- Total weight was 263 lbs.
- Using the Relay for Life metric of 237 bottles per 13.5 lbs. on average, approximately 4,600 containers were collected for recycling.

## **Braintree Farmers Market**

We have hosted this weekly Saturday morning event for five years during the summer and fall. We may have as many as 2,800 attendees when special events are hosted at the Market.

Several years ago, we installed temporary recycling containers at the Market. They consisted of a plastic bag in a wire frame with a recycling lid. These were paired with trash barrels. Unfortunately, Market attendees were not discriminating on what went into the trash and what should be recycled. We





generally found significant contamination in the recyclables bag by day's end. Contamination ranged from food, cardboard, paper products, other nonrecyclables, and Styrofoam cups. Volunteers with fortitude would sift through the bags to reclaim the recyclables on some days and other times, the contents were merely mixed with the trash for disposal.

This year we installed two event barrels paired with corresponding trash barrels at the Market. The Market season lasted 20 weeks.

What we collected:

- Collected a total of 10 bags of bottles with an average weight of 15 lbs. yielding a total of 150 lbs for the season.
- Using the Relay for Life metrics (237 bottles per 13.5 lbs. on average), that yielded approximately 2,600 bottles recycled.
- We found significantly less contamination than in previous years.

### **Town Parks**

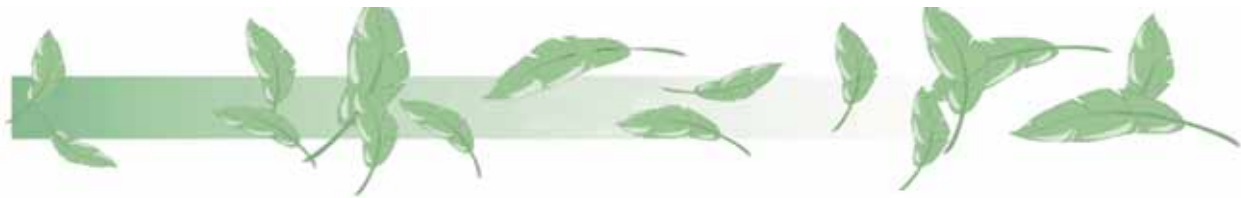
Sustainable Braintree fielded a number of event or seasonal barrels at the locations around Town for the summer. We paired the recycling barrels with trash barrels as often as possible. We fielded the barrels in the following locations:

- The Braintree High School tennis and basketball courts.
- The Hollingsworth baseball fields.
- The Highland Park.
- French's Common (Town park).
- Flaherty Elementary School.
- Town Movie Night.

We monitored and collected the recyclables periodically on an as needed basis. The recyclables were taken to the Town Recycling Center.

What we collected:

- One pickup at the tennis court and basketball courts yielded two bags of recyclables of approximately 480 bottles (approximately 27 lbs) for a one month period. Minimal contamination was found.
- A total of 306 lbs. was collected for the summer season from all locations



or approximately 5,400 bottles recycled as estimated using the Relay for Life metrics (237 bottles per 13.5 lbs. on average).

### **Youth Soccer League**

We successfully coordinated, with the enthusiasm of Mr. Nelson Chin, Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Department, the establishment of a league recycling program at the youth soccer fields at East Middle School. The fall youth soccer season lasts from September through October each year.

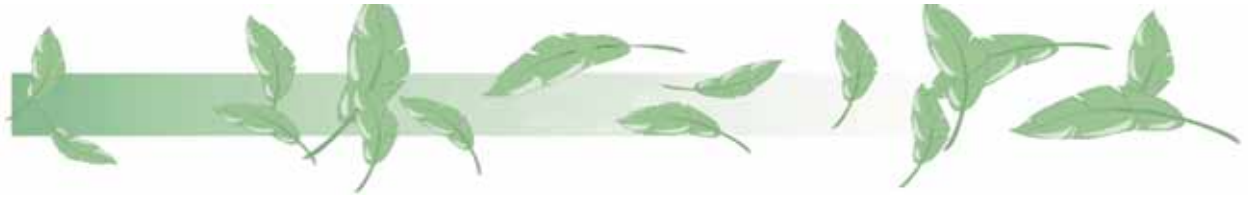
The soccer league generally hosts around 2,000 youth participants ranging from six to 16 years of age. The soccer games generally last all day Saturday and Sunday with older youths also playing a weekday schedule. Weekend soccer games also include a significant number of parent spectators, although an average count was not available.

The league had initiated a limited recycling program in the past, but this was the first full scale effort taken on by the league. We supplied 31 seasonal barrels that were paired with trash barrels with some barrels as stand-alones. The Town assisted us by procuring a small dumpster from Capital Waste designated for the bags of recyclables that was kept behind the school.

Soccer league volunteers were responsible for monitoring and emptying the seasonal barrels along with the trash barrels on a weekly basis. We only occasionally inspected the dumpster and randomly selected seasonal barrels to identify any potential issues with contamination or insufficient servicing.

What we collected:

- A total of 330 lbs were recycled representing approximately 5,800 bottles using the Relay for Life metric (237 bottles per 13.5 lbs on average).
- The league volunteers found minimal contamination and also advised us that they pulled any noticeable contamination from the bags during collection.
- We also found that the school had also started collecting bottles and placed them in the recycling dumpster. (These were not counted in our grant totals.)
- Our random inspections did not identify any issues with contamination or barrel servicing by the league.



## The Summary & Lessons Learned

Sustainable Braintree proposed an ambitious effort to promote and implement a community event recycling program in our Town. We wanted to test the political waters and navigate the logistics. This effort would involve a wide group of individuals and organizations to better understand what makes such a program success and what it would take to urge the Town to incorporate such a program into its normal municipal functions.

What we found first – the political climate must be at a tipping point, much more than building on Town official enthusiasm. There has to be a strong Town commitment to overcome not just general bureaucracy, but political sentiment and personal beliefs within that bureaucracy. We had initial support from the Mayor's Office and Department of Public Works when we applied for the SMRP grant, but underestimated the inter-department politics, labor, and financial issues that needed to be resolved in just a few months after grant acceptance and the start of the summer season when most of these events occur. This is exemplified by our inability to get the *Parks, Playgrounds, Town Field & Facility Use Permit* changed to require mandatory recycling at community events and youth sport venues. Town commitment seemed to wane and legal issues were raised leading to a delay in Permit Application language approval. Coupled with the fact that the revised Permit Rules and Requirements were approved and implemented after the summer youth baseball leagues had already applied for and received their permits, we found ourselves at a disadvantage in trying to negotiate an agreement between the Town, those leagues, and ourselves. It wasn't until a new Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Department was installed in May 2012, did we get the needed support that culminated in a recycling program kickoff with the fall youth soccer league.

We also found that to urge and implement a successful community event recycling program, the Town must make it mandatory to participate as a condition of any event permit. Without that, one has to rely on personal and political stance regarding the benefits of recycling and environmental stewardship to move forward. We find the financial cost of this stewardship a consistent topic of discussion with Town officials and event organizers despite the state mandatory ban on recyclable bottles and cans from the solid wastestream. We appreciate the pressure on Town resources and general public sentiment on smaller government puts a community event recycling program on the back burner. We are only talking about an estimated 200 tons of waste from events in a community that generates approximately 17,000 tons of residential waste annually. If a community group, such as Sustainable Braintree, obtains grant funding or provides its own funding, we find better reception from Town officials until it is time to discuss a future budgetary commitment with reduced volunteer support. We conclude the near future of government spending appears, at this time, to be against expansion of any

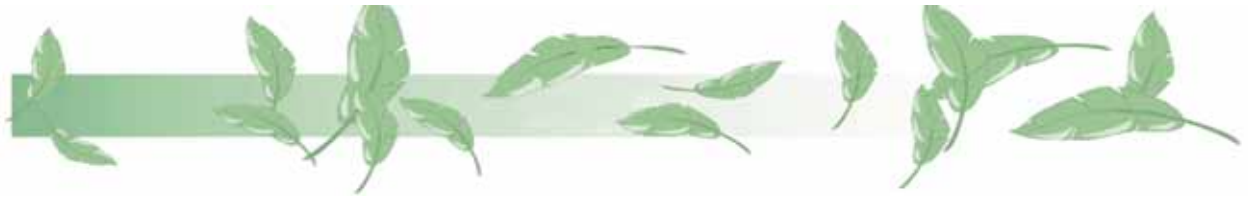


community event recycling program without significant Sustainable Braintree volunteer support.

We also find that volunteer support must emanate from the entire organization, not just its champions. Eileen Campbell and Linda Chapman, the Recycling Task Force Co-Chairs spearheading our effort, expended not just in-field volunteer hours but time making numerous phone calls, sending emails, and making personal visits to overcome logistical issues. Our failure to negotiate agreements with two youth baseball leagues early on initially weighed heavily on our motivation to succeed that was later rewarded with an agreement with the youth soccer league. We also used many of our own volunteers, even from our other three task forces, and those from other organizations like the Boy Scouts.

In light of these issues, Sustainable Braintree is pleased to provide the following metrics generated as part of the SMRP grant. It gives perspective to the costs and benefits expended by a non-profit organization trying to shepherd development of a successful community event recycling program.

- We diverted 1,279 lbs of recyclables representing approximately 22,400 bottles and cans from the Town's solid wastestream during the grant period, June through November 2012.
- We spent just under 50% of the budget (\$4,479.39). Roughly half of that amount was spent for event and seasonal recycling barrels and the other half was for promotional printing. A small amount was spent on ancillary items, e.g., rope, liner bags, weighing scale, etc.
- We expended \$425 of nongrant funding for the graphic design of promotional materials.
- We expended 358 volunteer hours almost evenly split between Eileen Campbell & Linda Chapman at the manager level (178 hours total) and in-field volunteers (180 hours). Approximately half of the manager level hours (92 hours) were spent early on trying to change the Permit Application and get event and youth sport organizers to come to the table and work with us.
- Our matching costs (\$5,834.10) were above that required by the grant – \$4,900. However, our matching contribution was projected based on full grant funding so we proportionally exceeded in excess of our matching contribution compared to actual monies spent under the grant.
- If we take the total number of containers recycled and compare that to volunteer hours, we find that each volunteer hour yielded only 87 containers or 3.6 lbs recycled in this grant project.



- The Town receives approximately \$22/ton for recyclables. This means we only recovered 14 dollars for the Town.

Some of our other notable findings:

- When presented with paired recycling and trash barrels, people will recycle their bottles and cans.
- We found that the paired barrels also significantly reduced contamination, as little as 1% of the total weight collected. Most contamination was from residual liquids in the bottles and cans.
- We found from incidental observation, without calculating a metric, that adults and youths will recycle their used bottles and cans if provided that option. General public knowledge, school education on environmental issues, and media coverage have contributed to wider awareness. This is especially true with the quantity of bottles and cans with minimal contamination collected at the tennis and basketball courts: frequented by both adults and youths.
- We find that a mandatory recycling requirement for any event permit is required to get all parties involved even though a state mandated recycling requirement is already in place. For now, organizers have to take on an environmental stewardship position at their management level, like the Relay for Life and the youth soccer league, to make recycling a success. If they are responsible for their own costs of trash disposal, then they do gain a corresponding reduction in those costs when implementing the recycling program.
- Significant investment of volunteer and third-party funding resources aid in community event recycling program development, but long term investment will be taxing on any nonprofit organization and its volunteers, unless the Town and organizers assume more responsibility with a strong commitment to mandatory recycling and funding resources.

## The Future

This grant project has identified challenges and opportunities on how we can continue to work with Town officials to make further inroads into recycling at community events. We will continue to provide recycling barrels and work with organizers from the Relay for Life, Independence Day Celebration, the soccer league, and other town-sponsored community events/play fields. A commitment has been made to continue our efforts and put the promotional materials already developed to establish a recycling program at baseball league events despite the challenges encountered last summer. We recognize that more support from Town officials is needed to make community event recycling a success and we will continue working with them during the off-season and next year.



## **Selected Photographs**



Tom Whelan (left) and Mayor Sullivan posing with one of our event barrels.



Linda Chapman servicing an event barrel at the Relay for Life.



Bob and Eileen Campbell storing event barrels at the high school.



Youth recycling at the Braintree Independence Day Celebration.



A seasonal barrel at one of the baseball fields.



For his enthusiastic support, Sustainable Braintree gave Nelson Chin a framed poster promoting recycling at the youth soccer league.

# **Appendix A**

## **Permit Information Sheet**



All field users are expected to adhere to the following guidelines to help keep the fields in acceptable condition for public use. Violation of these guidelines may result in fines or the loss of permit and use privileges

Permit holders are required to see that players and spectators adhere to all of the following regulations regarding trash and recycling disposal and collection.

- ❖ No Littering.
- ❖ All trash must be placed in proper receptacles and or carried away for proper disposal.
- ❖ All recyclables must be placed in the nearest recycling receptacle
- ❖ Recycling receptacles need to be emptied at the end of field use and transferred to the designate dumpster.
- ❖ New plastic bags must be place inside recycling receptacle.
- ❖ Participants in the sports programs, parents and supporters must be made aware of the recycling /trash policy for fields use.

